

New Haven Public Schools

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON VARIOUS BILLS

Senator Gaffey, Rep. Fleischmann, Members of the Education Committee, my name is Dr. Reginald Mayo, I am the Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools, and I am submitting this testimony concerning a number of bills before you today.

In brief, we support H.B. No. 5421 AAC Educators and Administrators.

We have concerns about H.B. No. 5423 AAC Dissection Choice, H.B. No. 5425 AAC Special Education, and S.B. No. 377 AAC School Construction Projects.

Of the bill we support:

- **House Bill No. 5421, AAC Educators and Administrators.** We strongly support this bill. Creating alternate routes to certification for administrators and superintendents will expand the pool of highly qualified individuals to hold these positions. There are vast shortages of qualified superintendents and administrators. Providing for alternate routes to certification will enable districts to attract the highly educated personnel from the business world to transition to educational leadership positions. We support passage of this bill with a few minor revisions.
 - Section 2(b)(2) as written requires applicants to have thirty months or less of teaching experience. We would recommend amending this language to state "thirty months of teaching or other educational leadership experience." This would allow for candidates who have worked for school districts in leadership capacities to qualify for the alternative route to certification.

Of the bills where we have concerns:

- **House Bill No. 5423, AAC Dissection Choice.** We have concerns about the practicality of this bill. New Haven already has a district policy allowing opt out for general courses like Biology, but for other courses such as Anatomy we state that it is a fundamental part of the course in the description. Therefore, if a high school student signs up for the course it is a problem to then later allow the student to opt out. Most of our aquaculture school courses in that subject area do involve animal experimentation, which are again fundamental to the courses.

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Given our concerns, we would suggest referring this proposal to the Connecticut Academy for Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology for further examination of these issues.

- **House Bill No. 5425, AAC Special Education.**
 - **Section 2(a)** We have concerns about the proposed language in Section 2(a) requiring that Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services provided to students with autism be provided by Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs). ABA involves the activation of the principles of behaviorism, e.g., positive reinforcement. This model may be utilized by many mental health professionals. Most BCBAs are not certified educators, and are unfamiliar with teaching and learning from a curricular point of view. Additionally, ABA is utilized for many students, not only those diagnosed with autism. We are concerned that the certification requirement could extend to any student needing a behavioral intervention to have that intervention overseen by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). The research supports the notion that ABA works well for students possessing autism, yet, it is not the only intervention which is successful. Passage of this bill would be the equivalent to the state legislature endorsing ABA as THE treatment for autism. We oppose the inclusion of this section in the proposed bill.
 - **Section 4(h)** We also have concerns about Section 4(h) which requires any district from which a child transfers from after October 1, to continue paying for any special education services provided by the receiving district. We are concerned that this section will punish innovative districts that provide alternative programming to students in their districts including NHPS. NHPS creates programs to work with its most challenging students. Many districts with lesser scale special education programs place their severely disabled students in out-of-district facilities. Our solution would be to amend the proposed language to state that the sending district is responsible for the then current IEP **as designed** on the day the student enrolled in the new district. If the receiving district changes the IEP services, it should assume full cost responsibility from that point forward.
- **Senate Bill No. 337, AAC School Construction Projects.** School construction projects are required to meet LEED silver or equivalent standards, which require energy modeling. The Life Cycle Cost Analysis requirement laid out in SB 337 is redundant and brings another state agency into the already cumbersome approval process. We oppose the addition of this extra step.